



CITY OF
MESA

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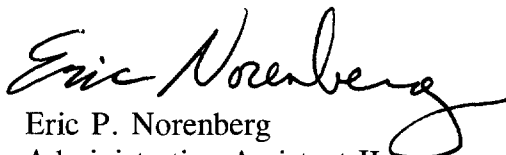
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Ms. Donna M. Searcy, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

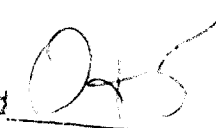
Dear Ms. Searcy:

Enclosed please find the comments of the City of Mesa concerning Implementation of Section 17 of the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992 - Compatibility between Cable Systems and Consumer Electronics Equipment (ET Docket No. 93-7). The City welcomes the opportunity to provide these comments and is pleased to be a part of the inquiry process.

Sincerely,


Eric P. Norenberg
Administrative Assistant II

Enclosures

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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)

Implementation of Section 17)
of the Cable Television)
Consumer Protection and)
Competition Act of 1992)

ET Docket No. 93-7

Compatibility between)
Cable Systems and Consumer)
Electronics Equipment)

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

TO: The Commission

Comments of the City of Mesa, Arizona

The City of Mesa, Arizona, submits the following comments in response to the Commission's Notice of Inquiry (issued January 29, 1993).

Introduction

In the Notice of Inquiry, the Commission requested comment on issues relating to the compatibility of cable television systems with consumer electronics. The City cannot offer technical expertise in this area, however, we wish to provide the Commission with anecdotal information on the experiences of our citizens and recommendations for the Commission's future rulemaking on compatibility topics. Over the past few years, the citizens of the City of Mesa have experienced the effects of an "upgrade" of the cable television system operated by Times Mirror Cable of Arizona (dba Dimension Cable). This upgrade brought converters into many homes which previously had none. Our comments focus on the problems encountered by these citizens as they attempted to use their televisions and VCRs in the same manner as they did prior to the introduction of converters. Judging by the number of

complaints received by City staff the use of converters and the inconvenience caused by the compatibility problems are of at least as much concern to many cable subscribers as are rate increases.

Consumer Experiences

Prior to the introduction of addressable converters to the Mesa Times Mirror Cable Television system, many citizens subscribed to basic service and either HBO or Showtime, or both, since these two premium channels were not scrambled and no converter was required (traps were used to prevent unauthorized reception). As the addressable converters were installed and HBO and Showtime were scrambled, the City began receiving complaints from customers who felt the converters took away their freedom to use their TVs and VCRs to the full extent to which they were accustomed. Frequently, the comment was made that the converter forced the customer to either pay more to get the same level of service (by having to rent an additional converter or remote control) or that the customer could not afford the additional costs and was either dropping the HBO or Showtime services to avoid the converter or just enduring the inconvenience. (With the addressable converter came the ability to receive pay-per-view programming, but for those who called to complain this was not generally an attractive enough feature to outweigh the negatives.)

The three most-often-expressed problems were:

- Inability to record and view HBO and Showtime at the same time;
- Difficulty in rearranging the connections for the converter, VCR, and television when viewing a scrambled channel while recording a non-scrambled channel and, vice versa;
- Requiring rental of a remote control to be able to program the converter in advance to change channels for unattended recording. (The converter's time control function is a feature that cannot be used without a remote control supplied by the cable company.

(Reference: Paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Notice.)

Notice

The City of Mesa supports requiring cable television operators to notify subscribers and potential subscribers when use of converter units may reduce the customer's ability to use the features of their TV receivers and VCRs. Further, that notice should explain:

- The fact that the converter will prevent the subscriber from watching and recording scrambled programs at the same time, unless an additional converter is rented;
- That to record one program while watching another program may require the subscriber to go through additional steps, including possibly changing the wiring from the converter to the TV or VCR or having several A/B switches;
- Whether features of the converter (such as programming the converter to change channels for unattended recording or parental lock-out control) require rental of a remote control;
- The problems that will be encountered in attempting to use special features of newer televisions or VCRs such as "picture-in-picture."

In addition, the Commission should consider requiring cable television operators to supply easy-to-understand instruction manuals that detail the various combinations for interconnecting televisions and VCRs with converters, including the use of A/B switches. (Reference: Paragraph 5 of the Notice.)

Converters

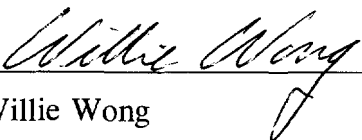
The City of Mesa urges the Commission to adopt rules requiring cable television operators to work with converter manufacturers to develop converters that offer a dual output to send descrambled signals to either the television or VCR. Rather than requiring complete rewiring of the converter-TV-VCR system when a customer wishes to record and view different programs, converters should be able to be simply programmed to deliver one channel to the VCR and another to the TV regardless of descrambling. A converter with this capability could also be utilized to deliver different signals to televisions with picture-in-picture features. (Reference: Paragraph 14 of the Notice.)

Remote Control

The City of Mesa recommends the Commission adopt rules regarding remote controls that require cable television operators, the manufacturers of converters, and the manufacturers of "universal" remote controls to coordinate their research/development/production efforts to ensure that universal remote controls have the ability to control special cable converter features (such as parental lock-out, time control programming, etc.).

Additionally, the City urges the Commission to require cable operators to make available to customers who request it information on universal remote controls, including a list of universal remote controls (brand names and model numbers) which are compatible with the converters in use by the cable system. (Reference: Paragraphs 5 and 15 of the Notice.)

Respectfully submitted,



Willie Wong

Mayor

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